

The Spirit of Diotrephes: Pastors/Leaders who control, manipulate and accuse

by Danny Lirette

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Diotrephes was a leader – most likely a Pastor – in the early Church whom the Apostle John named openly in John as being a leader who controlled those who were in his church. Diotrephes told those in his church not to associate with the Apostles and went further and forbade his people from welcoming Christians of other churches. Today, I want to deal with leaders who display a spirit of Diotrephes; who manipulate and control their sheep to stay away from other ministers and ministries.

Let's now go to our text as found in 3 John 1:9-11 which says:

“I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, refuses to have anything to do with us. When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the evil accusations he is making against us. Not only does he refuse to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church. Dear friend, don't let this bad example influence you. Follow only what is good. Remember that those who do good prove that they are God's children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God. ”

Let's break down the text piece by piece:

1- I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader... Those under the spirit of Diotrephes love being in the spotlight; they have a lust for power over people. If you don't do what they demand, you're shunned. They carry with them a spirit that seeks to control your life through prophecies, accusations and slander. They appear to have a concern but their only concern is whether or not you'll bow to their controlling spirit. They have no interest in your soul; they want only to build their personal empire on the backs of God's people.

2- Refuses to have anything to do with us. Those under the spirit of Diotrephes refuse to have anything to do with godly men and women. Diotrephes in 3 John was most likely put into his pastoral position by the apostles and yet we see that he now refuses to have anything to do with them at all. Those who operate under this spirit were at one time godly yet through the lust for power and control, have turned from Christ and are now the enemies of God's People. They pretend to love yet in their private conversations they display disdain and bitterness towards others.

3- When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the evil accusations he is making against us. Those under the spirit of Diotrephes

bring “evil accusations” against others. They have poison in their speech and tell other believers not to associate with godly men and women. This is what Diotrephes did to the Apostles, according to the above passage. Leaders who constantly make evil accusations against God’s People show that they are being influenced by the devil who is the “accuser of the brethren”.(Revelation 12:10) False leaders will always accuse God’s people; they carry a spirit of accusation and rebellion within them.

4- Not only does he refuse to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. Those under the spirit of Diotrephes refuse to welcome those of other churches and in fact they go so far as to tell their own congregation members to stay away from those of other churches. They do this because they don’t want to lose control over those who are in their churches. They carry a fear within them that others will discern the spirit in them. They welcome only those who agree with them and shun those who do not.

5- And when they do help, he puts them out of the church. Those under the spirit of Diotrephes threaten their congregation members with being removed from the church if they associate with those the leader doesn’t like or agree with. They use manipulation, control and tactics such as false accusations and slander to make certain that those in their church fall in line. Or else. Leaders who are operating under the spirit of Diotrephes do not realize that they’re being influenced by devils yet the evidence is in their secret speech and in their show of anger and “disappointment” when those under their ministries don’t do whatever they say.

6- Dear friend, don’t let this bad example influence you. The Apostle John is telling us not to allow such false leaders to influence us. He’s telling us not to allow ourselves to come under the controlling spirit of leaders who lust for power and speak evil of those of other churches and ministries. This tells us that even those who are under the spirit of Diotrpehes cannot touch us nor harm us if we choose to obey the Lord rather than their manipulative ways against God’s People. If we have the fear of man, we’ll cave under their pressure; however, the Lord has not given us a spirit of fear but rather he’s given us a spirit of love, power and a sound mind. you and I have authority over false leadership.

7- Remember that those who do good prove that they are God’s children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God. Finally, the Apostle John tells us in very plain speech that leaders who exhibit behavior that controls, manipulates and puts pressure on people are not only in error; they’re of the devil. Of course leaders can be in error and still be of God yet for the most part such people are of satan. The Lord doesn’t forbid people from attending other churches, supporting other ministries, etc. Those who control their people in such ways are not of God.

Conclusion:

Brothers and sisters, whether it's here at Revival House Fellowship or at any other assembly, may it never be found among any of us to control, accuse and manipulate others. God's people are always free to fellowship with who they want if that fellowship is godly, when they want; leaders who teach otherwise are walking in the spirit of Diotrephes and are being influenced by devils. To control God's people with pressure, accusations and secret slanders is to work against God's Kingdom and against God Himself. Let it never once be named among us.

For you who attend churches who's leadership accuses others secretly and seeks to control who you can and cannot fellowship with... run. Run as fast as you can! These kinds of leaders are no different than abusive men who slowly but surely control who their wives can and cannot hang out with until he - the abuser - becomes her only "friend". This is how satan works; he removes from your life any and all fellowship with others until you're dependent on one or two leaders and that leader's church alone. It's spiritual abuse of the highest order and such leaders are of the devil.

May God raise up leadership in these Last days who will feed and lead God's People into green pastures!